

News Release

UMC Opens Korean Preparation Center for ESL Program

By Rae French on Thursday, October 20, 2005

The University of Minnesota, Crookston (UMC) welcomed five English as a Second Language (ESL) students to campus. The students from Seoul and Incheon, Korea arrived at the Grand Forks Airport on the evening of October 18, 2005. The four young men and one young woman are part of a unique program at UMC for students who wish to have the opportunity to study in the United States and seek a degree following the completion of the ESL program. Sean Shin, director of the ESL program at UMC, says, "The ESL program is a chance for students to advance their language proficiency and an understanding of the customs of this country."

Shin works with Don Sargeant, chancellor emeritus, and Rae French, both from the Learning Abroad Center at UMC. The two helped Shin recruit and prepare for the arrival of the students from Korea. They are part of UMC's ESL program. These students are just the beginning; in January, as many as 10 to 15 international students are expected to come to UMC to take advantage of the program.

These students met with administration, took tours, and shared in a meeting of the International and Multicultural Club to help to acquaint them to Crookston and to UMC. They will be staying with host families before they officially begin classes next week. They were surprised by the size of the campus and the solitude of northwestern Minnesota, but they remarked about the cleanliness and the friendliness of everyone at UMC. Those complimentary remarks were from students whose appreciation and courtesy were inimitable. They were gracious, respectful ambassadors for Korea.

For the students, ranging in age from 19 to 25, the experience feels a bit overwhelming, but they are excited about the opportunity. The group has lofty goals for their study. Si Nae Maeng, the only female in the group, just graduated from high school and wants to study in the Hotel and Restaurant Management Program with the goal of becoming a hotelier. The men are older students who have already attended the university in Korea. Hee Kwon Kim wants to major in accounting and go to school in Oxford's Saïd Business School, ranked as one of the top five schools in the world

Cheul Yong Choi is interested in business and would like to be an entrepreneur, but his plans include a business undergraduate degree and then on for a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) to the University of Pennsylvania's Watson Business School or maybe the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Business. Soo Keun Kim enjoys art and would like to incorporate an art degree and an MBA to be used in his pursuit to become an entrepreneur. He is not sure how he will combine the degrees or tailor them to his exact interests. Jung Hwan Park is considering a degree in counseling with the dream of attending the University of Minnesota's School of Law. He would like to be involved in the world of international business.

These might seem like lofty goals, and they are, but these students came to the United States because they are serious their careers and that begins with improving their English language skills. This experience is more than a study abroad one; it is an opportunity for them to become a "global task force" as Shin explains. "The reason these students are here is to study hard, and this program is the doorway to learn to communicate and become a player in the global marketplace. The world has changed and these students want to be able to work and live globally."

The ESL program's classes begin October 25. Creating the ESL program will allow UMC to provide language support for international students. Increasing international student enrollment is part of the strategic planning initiative currently underway throughout the University of Minnesota system including UMC.

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